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15 May

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15 MAY 1959

*OAD/RR*

**MEMORANDUM FOR:** Director of Central Intelligence

**THROUGH:** Deputy Director/Intelligence

**SUBJECT:** Soviet Transfer to Communist China of the  
Sterling Proceeds from the Sale of Gold  
in Western Europe

**REFERENCE:** "Soviet Gold Sales and Sterling Transfers to  
Communist China" [REDACTED]

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& NSA 25X3

1. This memorandum is in response to your request to Mr. Sheldon and is for information only.

2. Western currency transfers similar to those in the referenced article (attached) have occurred in the past. In fact, the \$41 million in sterling transferred to the Communist Chinese, described in the referenced report, is only the most recent of a series of such transfers from Gosbank which since August 1958 have amounted to at least \$170 million. The USSR has frequently transferred deposits held in the West in convertible currencies to the accounts of Eastern Europe as well as to China.

3. The USSR provides many of the functions of a central bank for the Sino-Soviet Bloc. Foreign currency deposits held for the account of China and other Bloc countries in Moscow may be transferred to a

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Western European correspondent when needed by their owners to finance current trade. Moreover, the USSR sometimes advances Western currency funds as a short-term credit to other Bloc countries. Thus, there are frequent occasions when Soviet banks must make Western currencies available to other Bloc countries either from existing funds on deposit in Western Europe or by the sale of gold.

4. For a variety of reasons, including a desire for secrecy and the possibility of blocked accounts or devaluation, the USSR has always restricted its convertible currency accounts in the West to the level necessary to provide a minimum of "flexibility" and "maneuverability" in foreign trade. The USSR thus relies on its gold stock rather than on foreign currency holdings to provide the major portion of its international financial reserves.

5. The USSR at the present time is suffering from a shortage of sterling. The sizeable transfers of Western currency deposits by Gosbank to correspondents in London and Paris in recent months undoubtedly necessitated sales of gold in order to augment its Western currency holdings. In this way, the USSR has been able to meet its own current commercial commitments as well as those reflecting the drawings by the rest of the Bloc against the latter's convertible currency deposits held in Gosbank.

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6. The fact that China has recently invested in short-term interest-bearing deposits in London indicates that the Chinese are earning interest on their sterling balances as they are accumulated in anticipation of financial commitments.

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**Acting Assistant Director  
Research and Reports**

**Enclosure:  
Copy of Referenced Paper.**

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